

**Statement delivered by Dr Barbara Haering
President of the Council of Foundation, GICHD
High Level Segment**

**Fifth Review Conference of the APMBC
Siem Reap, Cambodia, 25-29 November 2024**

Mr. President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As we look back on former Review Conferences, we realize, to what extent the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention has achieved historic success. Since its entry into force, 164 States Parties have destroyed more than 53 million stocked mines. Thirty States Parties have completed clearance. Countless lives have been saved, survivors supported, communities restored.

But let there be no misunderstanding: banning landmines has always been a challenge. The APMBC did not succeed because mines were not useful from a military point of view – but in spite. The Convention succeeded for ethical and moral reasons. Mines cause unacceptable human suffering, and the purpose of the Convention is clear: putting people first, their safety, their future. The Convention has anchored the global norm against the production, transfer and use of antipersonnel mines in our shared value system.

Ten years ago, at the third Review Conference in Maputo, we were confident to see light at the end of the tunnel. We aspired to meet the goals set by the Convention to the fullest extent possible by 2025 – so the Maputo+15 Declaration. Five years later, the Oslo Action Plan provided us with all we needed to strengthen effectiveness and efficiency of mine-action. However, we are not where we intended to be – nor where we should be.

We are concerned that security crises lead to renewed arguments favoring landmines and we deplore to what extent multilateralism and International Humanitarian Law are under pressure, hampering humanitarian action and human security. Thus, more than ever, we need to go back to the origins of the Convention and reaffirm its most fundamental goals.

Mine contamination remains significant not only in new conflicts but across the world. 33 States Parties are still working on mine-area clearance. Progress has been uneven, hindered by difficult access or security issues as well as insufficient funding and capacities. There are competing priorities in the broader security and development context for both affected and donor States. However, years of experience have allowed us to identify and to consolidate approaches, systems, methods and tools that increase the effectiveness and the efficiency of humanitarian demining. At this point I would like to draw your attention to three cross-cutting elements that are at the core to the GICHD's mission as a competence center:

- First, **national ownership**. Mine affected states are responsible for clearance and must always be in the driver's seat, they must own the process. We assist them in finding responses tailored to their needs and challenges, and also to opportunities of their country.

Thus, we constantly need to support the development of national capacities, and we must ensure they are equipped with the human, technical and financial resources needed. Capacity development is a long-term effort under the leadership of affected states.

- Second, **innovation**. Not only in emerging technologies and tools, but also regarding policies, approaches and methods, innovation has an important transformative power for our sector. Thus, we must continue investing in innovation across the board of APMBC obligations. Innovative products and processes are essential to keep pace with evolving challenges to our work. Innovative finance solutions can bridge funding gaps and ensure that no mine affected country is left behind. The Conference launched last year by the GICHD in Geneva underlined to what extent innovation depends on a collaborative work across sectors and countries sharing experience made.
- And third, **inclusiveness**. Without inclusiveness, mine-action will not be effective and will not lead to sustainable developments. Needs and priorities of everyone affected must be considered across all pillars of mine-action. Mainstreaming gender and other diversity factors into our work enables us to respond to this challenge. During the last years, significant progress has been made in this respect. Data collected by Mines Action Canada from 2019 to 2023 highlight that the percentage of women working for international operators increased from 20% to 30% of the total workforce, doubling in real terms. Disaggregated data has become a firmly established tool to understand the impact of mines and tailor responses accordingly. I would like to celebrate this success, and I do hope the commitment will be maintained in the upcoming Action Plan. Especially today on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, it is critical to highlight the ongoing need for robust safeguarding systems to protect both mine action staff and affected communities.

While clearance is our core task, we must also take care about victim assistance and risk education. Cambodia and their land mine survivors show us the way. A recent GICHD analysis highlights that risk education is increasingly acknowledged as a key response in emergencies and post-conflict environments. It is also an innovative, adaptable and effective measure to mitigate explosive ordnance risks in phases of land release phases and after completion. Thus, the need for sustainable and earmarked funding for risk education remains high. We need to ensure adequate investments in this critical life-saving activity.

Treaty implementation is a slow and sometimes a painstaking task – it takes perseverance. To fulfill the ambitious humanitarian promise of the APMBC, we must ensure that our commitment remains strong, our efforts consistent, attention high, and resources adequate. Let us collectively reaffirm the importance of the Convention reducing human suffering worldwide.

This Conference will adopt a strong and comprehensive Action Plan for our way forward. We sincerely thank you, Mr. President, your team and the Implementation Support Unit for leading us to this result in a transparent, inclusive, and highly productive process. The GICHD will do its utmost to support turning this ambitious Plan into reality and we thank our donors for their support.

I wish us all a good and productive Conference.

Thank you.